

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington
December 21, 2009

The President. I think one thing that's important to remember is that even though there's a lot of fun at Christmas, you know, you got—especially when it's snowy like this—the—so it's pretty outside—you got the Christmas tree, you got the Christmas cookies, you've got presents. You know, I think that the most important thing is just to remember why we celebrate Christmas, which is——

Child. I know.

The President. Do you know?

Child. The birth of baby Jesus.

The President. The birth of baby Jesus, and the—and what he symbolizes for people all around the world is the possibility of peace and people treating each other with respect. And so I just hope that spirit of giving that's so important at Christmas, I hope all of you guys remember that as well. You know, it's not just about getting a gift, but it's also doing something for other people.

Child. I know.

The President. So being nice to your mom and dad and grandma and aunties and showing respect to people, that's really important too, that's part of the Christmas spirit, don't you think? Do you agree with me?

Children. Yes.

The President. You do? Do you have an interesting observation?

Child. I know why we give gifts to other people.

The President. Why is that?

Child. Because the three wise men gave gifts to baby Jesus.

The President. That's exactly right. But the three wise men—the reason——

[At this point, a sign fell off the wall.]

The President. ——uh-oh, I thought that was the cookies going down.

Child. Oh, no, we can't have that.

The President. We couldn't have that.

You know, the three wise men—if you think about it, here are these guys, they have all this money, they've got all this wealth and power, and yet they took a long trip to a manger just to see a little baby. And it just shows you that just because you're powerful or you're wealthy, that's not what's important. What's important is what's—the kind of spirit you have.

So I hope everybody has a spirit of kindness and thoughtfulness, and everybody is really thinking about how can they do for other people—treating them well, because that's really the spirit of Christmas.

Does everybody agree with that?

Children. Yes!

The President. I agree with that. Well, you guys all seem like really sharp, sharp young people. And I'm very proud of you. And let me just ask you one last question. Is everybody here working pretty hard in school?

Children. Yes!

The President. Okay, because the thing that I want everybody to remember—the most important message I can leave is, is that you guys are—have so much potential. One of you could end up being President some day. But it's only going to happen if you stay focused and you work hard in school. And you guys, there's nothing wrong with having fun and fooling around and playing sports and listening to rap music and all that stuff. But I want you guys to read and hit the books and do your math, because that's really what's going to determine how you do in the future. All right? That's the most important thing you can do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. at Richard England Clubhouse #14.

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